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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joni Eareckson Tada Scholarship Awarded: Azusa Pacific University, Ambassador Advertising join forces to honor students in field of disability ministry

AGOURA HILLS, Calif., Nov. 10, 2011 – The first recipient of the Joni Eareckson Tada Scholarship at Azusa Pacific University (APU) was honored last week at a special ceremony to launch this new educational funding for worthy students in the field of disability ministry and social work at Azusa. This year's recipient was Angelica Guangorena, a senior at APU who plans to work with children with autism when she graduates.

"I'm deeply honored that Azusa Pacific University has established the Joni Eareckson Tada Scholarship Award, along with the help of our friends at the Ambassador agency," Tada said. "But I'm even more excited about how students at APU are getting involved in disability ministry and receiving special training to share the love of Christ with special needs families!"

One of the requirements for the scholarship recipients is their enrollment in the course *Suffering: Theological and Practical Perspectives on Disabilities* that is being offered at APU this semester. The entire class will be visiting Tada and her team at the Joni and Friends International Disability Center later this month for additional perspective on ways in which they can serve individuals with disabilities and their families.

The idea for a Joni Eareckson Tada scholarship originated with Peggy Campbell at Ambassador – a longtime friend of both Tada and the ministry. Campbell serves as a trustee at APU and is passionate about honoring the legacies of worthy individuals with scholarships that give deserving young students a better chance to fulfill their



Ken and Joni Eareckson Tada with scholarship recipient Angelica Guangorena and Peggy Campbell.

ministry dreams.

“The scholarship is a wonderful way to bring together these two worlds – the ministry of Joni Eareckson Tada and the values of APU as a university that cultivates world changers,” Campbell said.

Concurrent with the development of the scholarship fund, two APU professors – Dr. Cheryl Crawford from the Practical Theology Department and Dr. Mary Rawlings, Chair of the Department of Undergraduate Social Work – had been developing an interdisciplinary course combining the theological and social work perspectives to better prepare students for working alongside persons with disabilities. They had consulted with Joni and Friends on the curriculum and had just proposed the course to the university when the scholarship opportunity emerged.

“God worked the timing out beautifully,” Rawlings said. “The course and the content had already been on Cheryl and my hearts, and then to have the scholarship was an added bonus, validating our work and the work of the students.”

The criteria for the scholarship is that students be enrolled in the course “Suffering: Practical and Theological Perspectives on Disability,” participation in a year-long internship serving persons with a disability, either in a church or social services setting, and that they be upper class Social Work or Christian Ministries majors in good standing. The application includes an essay on their interest and commitment to work with people with disabilities, and how the integration of their Christian faith helps in this field.

“Cheryl and I are thrilled that we have a scholarship that is investing in future Christian leaders who have expressed a passion for working with persons with disabilities,” Rawlings said. “The work of Joni Eareckson Tada and the Joni and Friends International Disability Center exemplifies what we hope to accomplish in our students: An effective combination of faith and skilled service.”

For more than 30 years, [Joni and Friends International Disability Center](#) has worked to accelerate ministry to the disability community, offering a wide array of life-affirming ministries to people with disabilities around the world. Joni and Friends does this through the [Christian Institute on Disability](#); the International Disability Center; international radio and television programs filled with inspirational stories; [Wheels for the World](#), which every year sees thousands of individuals receive wheelchairs and the life-giving message of the Gospel, and [Family Retreats](#), where families affected by disability learn they are not alone.

Azusa Pacific University is an evangelical, Christian university committed to [God First](#) and excellence in higher education. With 53 [undergraduate majors](#), 37 [master's degrees](#), 21 [credentials](#), 7 [doctoral programs](#), and 5 [certificates](#), the university offers its more than 9,200 students a quality education on campus, [online](#), and at seven [regional centers](#) throughout Southern California.